

Department of Justice

High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project

Charlotte, North Carolina



Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected using criteria that included perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, Charlotte metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Participating Agencies

Partnership among Charlotte area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
- City of Charlotte
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Internal Revenue Service
- Mecklenburg County
- North Carolina National Guard
- North Carolina State Highway Patrol
- Transportation Security Administration
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
- U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)
- U.S. Secret Service (USSS)

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the Charlotte metropolitan area through the implementation of two interoperability solutions. The solutions supported and upgraded the use of existing, disparate interoperability and communications systems by extending coverage, capacity, and availability to more public safety agencies. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project’s interoperability goals, stakeholders were able to leverage and expand the working relationships among local, state, and federal agencies to resolve interoperability issues for the area.

The first solution provides additional agencies with access to the City of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County (C/M) radio system, a joint radio system supporting over 30 agencies. New caches of C/M portable radios were provided to eight agencies (e.g., CBP, DEA, ICE, USMS, USSS, North Carolina Air National Guard, North Carolina State Highway Patrol, and the City of Charlotte Radio Division) to support on-scene communications with other first responders operating on the C/M radio system. These radio caches increase interoperable communications capabilities among participating local, state, and federal public safety agencies’ command level staff.

The second solution provides additional equipment to increase the variety of radios that can be connected to the FBI’s deployable interoperability switch. This interface equipment better prepares agencies to interoperate with other first responders during emergency situations by providing agencies operating within their own system’s coverage area with a link to radio users of disparate, out-of-band systems. Agency technicians received training from the audio switch manufacturer, JPS Communications, to further their understanding of how to operate the new equipment and its interoperability capabilities.

In support of these solutions, operational assistance was provided through the development of standard operating procedures (SOP) to ensure effective and sustained use of the interoperability solutions. To coordinate common operating procedures for the new interoperability solutions, DOJ worked with the City of Charlotte’s Radio Communications Council to identify additional state and federal participants to join the local agency members. This collaborative effort resulted in the development of SOPs to address rules of use for requesting and deploying the radio caches and for operating the FBI’s deployable interoperability switch. The committee continues to meet to discuss interoperability efforts in the Charlotte metropolitan area.

Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give additional agencies access to the interoperability solutions. Sustained operations, maintenance, and support of these interoperability solutions will be coordinated by key stakeholders. These efforts, along with the area’s long-term interoperability plans, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the Charlotte metropolitan area.

Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative and the interoperability solutions, please contact—

DOJ Project / C/M Radio Network / SOPs

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